

Plebicula escheri HÜBNER 1823 in the Carpathian Basin ? (Lepidoptera, Lycaenidae)

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Abstract

The author has examined the *Plebicula escheri* HBN. data from the Carpathian Basin and concludes that these references are based on incorrect labelling.

Aba KERTÉSZ, one of the foremost Hungarian lepidopterists of the beginning of this century, mentions two male *escheri* HBN. specimens from the Carpathian Basin (Kertész 1912) (*Escheri* HBN. is referred to in earlier publications as well, but these data were certainly based on incorrect determinations). KERTÉSZ writes in his article that he caught one male "*Lycaena Escheri* HBN." in the hills of Buda on 20 July 1911, and Antal BAUDISZ another male at the same spot. He theorised as to how this species could occur in the Buda hills, but came to the unlikely conclusion that the eggs were blown to the place in question by wind. The KERTÉSZ specimen can still be found in the lepidoptera collection of the Natural History Museum in Budapest, but the specimen collected by BAUDISZ appears to have been lost. Subsequent to this paper, no further record has been published.

Later, Lajos KOVÁCS (1953) included *escheri* HBN. in his list of the Hungarian Lepidoptera on the evidence of this one existant specimen. Richard SZABÓ (1956) treated the species in his work (Lycaenidae of Hungary) as being already extinct and based upon this, GOZMÁNY (1968) also mentions it as being extinct in the serial work Fauna Hungariae.

Working on the Rhopalocera material of the Museum, I found three so far unknown male *escheri* HBN. specimens, provided with locality data from the Carpathian Basin. Two specimens come from the collection of Baron Dr. LIPTHAY (Szákul, July, leg. Á. KÁLDOR) with a printed label filled in by Liphay. The third one was included in the material of *Polyommatus icarus* ROTTEMBURG, 1775 with the label "Retyezát, Diószeghy", but without any further designation as to time and locality of capture.

I rather doubt the authenticity of the specimens deriving from the KÁLDOR collection, because LIPTHAY's material contains a number of distinctly alpine

insects with localities like Szákul, Retyezát, Herkulesfürdő – specimens supposed to have been collected by Ágoston KÁLDOR, and the labels written by LIPTHAY. I wrote a letter to Frideric KÖNIG to ask his opinion in this matter, and he confirmed my scepticism; in the Museum of Temesvár (Timișoara) there are a lot of butterflies collected by KÁLDOR bearing false labels! Furthermore, the environs of Szákul is not an «*escheri* site» according to KÖNIG who collected there many times.

The most striking thing about DIÓSZEGHY's specimen is the lack of designation of exact data: locality and date of capture. He never failed to put these down on the labels. I perused all of his works on the fauna of the Retyezát and he never mentions that he collected *escheri* HBN. Thus it seems that this specimen was not captured by him.

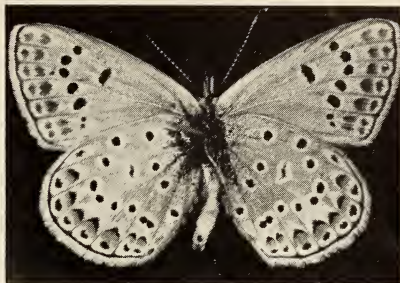
Further evidence supporting my views on the unreliability of the data on the occurrence of *escheri* HBN. in the Carpathian Basin concerns the great geographic distance between this locality and the nearest populations of *escheri* HBN., namely ssp. *dalmatica* SPEYER, 1882. Each one of the three specimens (from the different localities Budapest, Szákul, Retyezát) is morphologically different. The one from the Buda hills resembles *escheri* HBN. from Southern France (there is one male *escheri* HBN. with the locality Courmayeur from the collection of Aba Kertész in the Palearctic material of the Hungarian Natural History Museum!). The specimens from Szákul are similar to those occurring in the Alpes Maritimes, and the one from the Retyezát reminds one of those flying in the South of Switzerland.

Perhaps Herkulesfürdő (Băile Herculane) and the valley of the Néra would be a suitable habitat for *escheri* HBN., because a number of species with Balkan connections (*Lemonia balcanica* HERRICH-SCHÄFFER, 1843; *Xylena lunifera* WARREN, 1913; *Kirinia roxelana* CRAMER, 1777; *Coenonympha leander* ESPER, 1784; *Erebia melas* HERBST, 1796, etc.) inhabit this area. However, Herkulesfürdő is one of the best explored territories of the Carpathians, visited also by many western European collectors and it is still a place favoured by Rumanian and Hungarian lepidopterists. A number of papers have been published on the environs of Herkulesfürdő, but none of them records *escheri* HBN. as occurring there. It seems a safe inference therefore that records concerning the occurrence of *Plebicula escheri* HBN. in the Carpathian Basin are based on incorrect labelling; these data are unreliable and in consequence the species shall be deleted from the list of butterfly species of Hungary and the Carpathian Basin.

1a



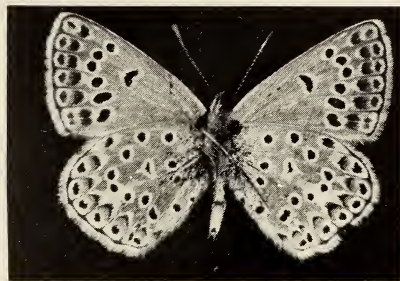
1b



2a



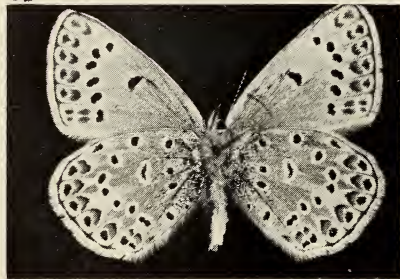
2b



3a



3b



4a



4b



Plebicula escheri HBN. 1823 specimens.

1a ssp. *dalmatica* SPEYER 1882 – Zara, Mai (without data) ; coll. BARTHA.

1b Underside.

2a Szákul, 1912. VII. ; KÁLDOR ÁGOSTON.

2b Underside.

3a Budapest, VI.18.1911 ; Dr. KERTÉSZ ABA.

3b Underside.

4a Retyezát ; DIÓSZEGHY.

4b Underside.

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